(c) if no, the reasons for the willingness to sign the treaty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) India has announced that it is prepared to bring its discussions with key interlocutors on a range of issues, including the CTBT, to successful conclusion so that the entry into force of the CTBT is not delayed beyond September, 1999. Government expects that other countries, as included in Article XIV of the CTBT, will adhere to the Treaty without conditions.

(b) and (c) India's stand on the CTBT was based on the assessment that the Treaty did not address our security concerns. The nuclear tests conducted by India in May 1998 have given us the basic capability for assured security. This is the rationale for the voluntary moratorium which fulfills the basic obligation required under the Treaty. This action has been taken only after the imperatives of national security obligations have been fully addressed.

Theft of Passports

560. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Policy have seized 972 blank passports stolen from Ghaziabad Regional Passport Office; and

(b) if so, whether any in depth probe has been made to identify the conniving officials and what precautionary safety measures have been taken in similarly vulnerable offices to avoid recurrences of such situations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) 962 out of a consignment of 1000 blank passport booklets stolen from the Passport Office at Ghaziabad, have been seized by the Delhi Police. The Passport Office at Ghaziabad has also filed a FIR with the Kavi Nagar Police Station.

(b) Apart from policy investigation of the theft, a departmental enquiry has been initiated regarding procedural lapses at the Passport Office and appropriate action will be taken against the officials found responsible. Suitable instructions for the safe keeping and account of blank passport booklets in stock have been emphatically reiterated to all Passport Offices for strict compliance. The importance of vigilance in ensuring that such incidents do not recur has been impressed on them.

Regional Passport Offices

561. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to delink the Regional Passport Offices from the administrative control of the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) in the alternative whether there is any decision to set-up a separate unit to attend to the welfare and administrative matters of the employees of the Regional Passport Offices;

(c) if not, whether Government process to constitute a team to examine the problem being faced by the employees of the Regional Passport Offices; and

(d) if so, the time frame required for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) No, Sir. The existing administrative framework is considered sufficient for this purpose.

(d) Does not arise.

Nuclear Tests

562. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the response of Pakistan, China

and the G-8 countries to the Prime Minister's unilateral declaration on the Independence Day (August 15, 1998) of the unilateral moratorium on further nuclear tests and the offer of negotiations on 'No first Use' of nuclear weapons towards the goal of Global disarmament; and

(b) what further steps have been taken and are contemplated by Government towards the said goal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Prime Minister's Independence Day speech received media coverage in Pakistan and China. There was however no official response to Prime Minister's Independence Day speech in these or the G-8 countries.

(b) At the Durban Summit of Non-aligned countries, India proposed and the Movement accepted that an international conference be convened in 1999 to arrive at an agreement on a time bound programme to abolish all nuclear weapons. At the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister reiterated this call. India has also proposed a new intiative at the UNGA aimed at reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons. India's commitment to disarmament remains undiluted and India would continue to work for global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

US Remarks on means of Tackling Militancy by India

563. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attentions has been drawn to the remarks made by U.S. Under Secretary of State to the effect that India should restrain from adopting pursuit course to tackle the problem of militancy from across the border;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government in the matter;

(c) whether Government will take up this issue with U.S. Government for its adopting double standards to tackle terrorism by it and advising others in a different way; and

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, during a briefing on August 26, 1998 reportedly said "we of course believe that all terrorism should cease". In the context of cross-border terrorism, he is reported as having said: "We understand there are very large military forces poised on each side, forces which could be used in event of attack, which might be misunderstood, or in the event circumstances get out of hand", and that "there heve been talks and we hope there will be continue to be talks to deal with the problems across the line of control (LOC)".

(b) and (c) Government has been consistently drawing the attention of the international community, through bilateral channels and in multilateral fora, to the issue of Pakistan's active and continued sponsorship of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. This has in particular been taken up on a number of occasions with the US authorities. The US government has conveyed that they understand India's concerns and that the US takes a serious view of such terrorist activities. The US has also designeated the Harkat-Ul-Ansar as a terrorist organisation under US laws.

(d) Does not arise.

ढाका से अजमेर के लिए बस सेवा का प्रस्ताव

564. श्री ओंकार सिंह लखावत: क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या बंगलादेश सरकार ने ढाका से अजमेर तक बस चलाने का प्रस्ताव भारत सरकार को भेजा है, यदि हां, तो इस संबंध में हुई प्रगति का ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(ख) क्या भारत सरकार इस प्रस्ताव को स्वीकृत करने का विचार रखती है?